6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

culture-heroine in mythology; and all the more so, as no such distinctively creative powers were ascribed to females in the myths of any other region then studied, such as the Kimberley Division of Western Australia, the Great Victoria Desert, North Queensland, nor South-East Australia. In the north-west and north-east of the continent, the important creative culture-heroes are males and many of them were at times in animal form. In the South-East not only was the male aspect dominant, but there was only one great hero, for each tribe or region, named here Bundjil, there Nurunderi, or Baiami or Gulambra or Goin and so on.*

In 1939 my friend, Mr. W. E. Harney, who had spent many years in and around Arnhem Land, and has a greater and sounder knowledge of Aboriginal custom, belief and ritual than any other layman sent me some notes in which much prominence was given to the "Old Woman," Kunapipi, both in doctrines and in ritual. After discussing the material with him, I was satisfied that in the Roper, Macarthur and Victoria River areas, a very vivid cult of the "mother-goddess" type was functioning. Her name varied, being Kunapipi, Mumuna, Kliarin-Kliari, and so on, but she was usually referred to as the "Old Woman" or the "Mother". She was the source of life in man and nature, both in the Dreamtime or creative past and now. In this activity she was associated with a great serpent, usually the Rainbow serpent, who "made the road" into the womb for the pre-existent spirits to be incarnated and reincarnated. She was also the very earth itself, that from which living things came and on which they depended for sustenance. This doctrine was expressed in the Kunapipi ritual. In it her womb was represented, by a trench into which the initiands were put, and from which they were reborn. In addition, the bullroarer, also representing her womb, when swung at the ritual became the sojourning symbol of each initiand's ritual or "wood" spirit. After the ceremony, when the Yermalindji, the symbol of the great snake, was burnt in the earth-womb, the bullroarer was buried there also. Thus, the lad's ritual "shade" remained in Kunapipi, and did so until the disintegration of the symbol, when

* I can speak from personal field work for all these regions except the north-east. See also articles in *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 46 62, R. Piddington, "Karadjeri Initiation", Vol. VI, No. 1, pp. 66-93, Ursula H. McConnel, "Myths of the Wikmunkan and Wiknatara Tribes"; *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, No. 4, pp. 452-477, Vol. VII, No. 1, pp. 69-105, "Totemic Hero Cults in the Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland"; Vol. IX, No. 4, pp. 382-404, A. Capell, "Mythology in Northern Kimberley", Vol. XIII, No. 3, pp. 255-260, and Vol. XIV, No. 1, pp. 31-53; "A Preliminary Report of Field Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia", by R. and C. Berndt, *Oceania Bound Reprint*, Sydney, 1945.
Also D. F. Thomson, "The Hero Cult, Initiation and Totemism on Cape York", *Journal, Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LXIII, pp. 453-538; and "Notes on a Hero Cult from the Gulf of Carpentaria, North Queensland", *op. cit.* Vol. LXIV, pp. 217-236. A. W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, pp. 475-508.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

sexual intercourse with the obvious representatives of the "Mother" enable her to fulfil her important function.

Thus, here as in the Ancient East, ritual sex-intercourse is a sacramental act in the cult of the "Great Mother", on which her potency and the survival of man and nature depend. In both regions we are in the presence of a "Mystery Religion". The precious guarded secret is only revealed to the initiated, the twice born, and that secret, that "mystery", is the continuity of life. Life, however, is no mere visible or external phenomenon. In all its forms it has a spiritual counterpart, its "shade". The Cult Mother is more than the Big Woman of the mythological period; she is eternal in the earth, and present and active in her "shade" form in every Kunapipi. The Great Snake, too, Muit or Yermalindji, is present in his symbols at the ceremony, teaching the "reborn" through the traditional words and ritual behaviour of the elders, speaking through them even as the prophet and teacher is the voice of his God. The ritual or "wood" shade, the spirit double of the initiand enters the bullroarer symbol of the Mother and with it remains in her "earth womb" until it goes to the spirit home. While the actors perform their rites to ensure the birth and rebirth of mankind and the "increase" of the Great Mother and the Great Snake as manifested in the rains and the consequent fertility of the earth, the spirit-womb of the Mother is made potent; in addition, as they represent in mime the behaviour of animals, reptiles, birds and insects, the "shades" of these creatures perform the increase ceremonies of their own kind in their own ritual places in the spirit-sphere. Finally, the women who have co-operated in the Kunapipi with their "outside" calls, responses, songs and dance (like the Bundami or Awalambi), and who then take part in the ritual intercourse with men from the Mother Place, become bearers of the latters' ritual or Kunapipi "shades"; at least, such is the doctrine in the Roper River region.

So life is assured to man and nature for it is eternal in the spirit world, in the Great Mother who brings forth and whose impregnating symbol is the Great Snake, the iridescent rainbow which never fails to join the sky to the earth.

Such is the appeal of the cult. Its function in the social and economic life of a food-gathering people in a tropical environment can be studied, and indeed is obvious and logical. A most valuable attempt to analyse the North-East Arnhem Land cults from this point of view has already been made by Professor W. L. Warner in *A Black Civilization*. But why should such a Fertility Goddess cult arise in Arnhem Land and the Victoria River region, and not also in the northern part of the Kimberley Division or in Cape York Peninsula, where the tropical seasons and conditions of living for a parasitic food-gathering people are similar? The answer probably lies in the differences in external contacts. Here it is sufficient to say

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

114 177 794 796 [773] that the several centuries of contact with Macassan and pre-Macassan traders, fishers and sojourners which marked the Arnhem Land coasts from the Victoria River right round to Groote Eylandt, were not experienced in the other two tropical regions. It is, therefore, possible that pre-Islamic religious influence was exerted on the Aborigines, perhaps through individuals who accompanied the Macassans and others to the islands to the north, for in some of these, the earlier Hindu cults were cherished in spite of the proselytizing nature of Islam. Moreover, the Mother cult-heroine is said in myths to have come through the sea, whether she be Kunapipi of the Victoria and the Roper, or the Mother of the Iwaidja and other tribes of Western Arnhem Land.*

Mana and Other Problems

114 778 [776] The above is the general principle and question raised by the Kunapipi cult. Mr. Berndt's book, however, in giving a description and analysis of this cult, raises many other important matters. For example, there is the problem of power or "grace" in religion, indicated in north-east Arnhem Land by the term *dal*. It is the anthropological problem of *mana* over again. It operates through the Mother or through Ancestral Beings who in their "spirit parts" are present in the ritual. But does the ritual automatically release that power, setting it in motion for the welfare of man and nature? Or is it manifested through life and increase by the will of the Mother or other Being in response to the ritual? Obviously, according to the doctrine, it cannot operate apart from such Being or Beings. Indeed, is it not that Being in activity or rather in relation to man and nature —an activity and presence realized in ritual? Problems associated with the Doctrine of the Trinity are not peculiar to Christianity.

114 842 796 Mr. Berndt agrees with Professor Warner that the Aborigines are not ignorant of physiological paternity. The ritual supports this contention. True, these natives hold also the doctrine of pre-existence, of spirit-children who enter the mothers for incarnation. But, what this entry does is to provide the "shade", the eternal spirit-part, and so give life to that which is already in the womb, as the result of sexual intercourse. Intercourse does not merely prepare the way for the entry of the child-spirit and for its subsequent birth; this is the usual view. In addition, it is followed by the formation of the foetus

* The point of entry of the Fertility Mother cult of north-western Arnhem Land is definitely placed by the Aborigines and their song cycles in the Coburg Peninsula. The Kunapipi cult, however, seems to be distinct from this, and while I incline to find its point of distribution in the lower Victoria region, the final decision must wait for more research in the field and further analysis of the material already in hand. Mr. Berndt's maps in this volume refer only to the recent and present movement of Kunapipi songs, the movement west from the Roper being a return along a song route to a western point of distribution, and not necessarily diffusion from a point of entry at the mouth of the Roper.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

PREFACE

The main purpose of this work is to indicate some fundamental features of an Australian Aboriginal religious cult, the Kunapipi, in one particular area. North-eastern Arnhem Land has been selected, not because it presents a more exotic background or more spectacular ceremonies, but because the cult as seen here is fairly well defined, and because its religious concepts are important and significant to the people concerned. In this region there are several fairly well integrated religious cults, having a common theme and fundamental intent. Most of them, however, have complex local associations, whereas the Kunapipi ceremonies, which have been introduced into north-east Arnhem Land, belong to a configuration which is still widely diffused throughout the Northern Territory.

The plan is to examine the cult as seen in this one region, to consider its relative importance in adjacent areas, and so prepare the way for a more intensive analysis of it in the central-western part of the Northern Territory. Although introduced, the Kunapipi has become closely associated with more truly north-east Arnhem Land mythology, in particular, the Wauwalak, which is used to explain it; but the Wauwalak mythology itself was at some time diffused into north-eastern Arnhem Land, apparently from the same direction as this much later ritual.

The Kunapipi songs of Yirrkalla (in north-east Arnhem Land) have been derived from those commonly in use further south. By examining relevant songs and mythology of adjacent areas, it is possible to trace the movement and diffusion of this cult from one group to another, and to discuss (for instance) the source of the Yirrkalla Kunapipi. This is not really difficult, for the Kunapipi (in all the regions mentioned in this work) possesses the common theme of a Great Mother, expressed as either a single or a dual personality, her power being extended to her daughters, the Wauwalak, Ka'lerika'lering or Mungamunga. She is said to be responsible for the constant fertility of human beings and other natural species, and the continuing sequence of the seasons, as well as for the general similarity of her ritual, emblems and songs. In addition, certain "key" words, which are sacred, are used widely to designate ceremonies, objects and sacred beings.

What does this cult mean to its postulants? Why does it exist? What do the people themselves believe that they are receiving from it? Its basic intent seems to express the latent or conscious desires of

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

the individuals who combine to form the social group that carries out these ceremonies. And if this be so, does the cult adequately fulfil the wishes of the people, or do they feel that something is lacking? All this raises a variety of problems, of which only a few can be treated here. But to understand Aboriginal religion, its belief and rites, it is essential to have thorough knowledge of the mythology and songs of at least one particular cult. It is not enough merely to observe rituals performed on the sacred ground, and then to theorize from such observations; for Aboriginal sacred ritual is an acting out of mythology, and mythology, in turn, is recorded in elaborate and detailed song cycles which enshrine the meaning and significance of the ritual. Therefore, conclusions can be reached only after an analysis of these three aspects: ritual, mythology and song. This implies that the doctrines, intent and function of a specific religious cult, such as the Kunapipi, may be derived from analysis of the mythological, historical and present-day data available to the field-worker, especially as the cult is still a functioning element in the life of the people. From these we may arrive at some general conclusions concerning the essential nature of Australian Aboriginal religion. Such conclusions, however, do not necessarily provide a basis for interpreting "primitive" religion generally, nor a peg upon which to hang theories relating to the origin of religion. Indeed, it is unwise to describe Australian Aboriginal religion by that controversial and dubious term, "primitive". Aboriginal religious concepts, like those of Europe, have been changing through the ages in association with the cultural needs of the people. In the process, Aboriginal religion has developed into a mature and vivid faith, mediated through beliefs and rites, and giving to its adherents a deep satisfaction and happiness.

The whole question of Australian Aboriginal religion needs far more consideration than has been accorded it to date;[1] but before any reliable theoretical studies can be made, it is essential that anthropological field-workers should provide considerably more data than are at present available. Here, in this volume, is a study of one religious cult. But it should be kept in mind that this work deals with only one cult in one region, with reference to its diffusion in adjacent areas; other cults exist side by side with the Kunapipi, and still others are found in various parts of Aboriginal Australia. Whether all these cults are basically similar, and have a common intent and function within the separate native cultures, or whether they are fundamentally dissimilar, has yet to be determined.

1. E.g. E. Durkheim, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris, 1912; H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice*, *Mélanges d'histoire des religions*, Paris, 1909; R. H. Lowie, *Primitive Religion*, New York, 1924; G. Roheim, *Australian Totemism*, London, 1925, and *Animism, Magic, and the Divine King*, New York, 1930; P. Radin, *Primitive Religion, Its Nature and Origin*, New York, 1937.

121 562 771 796 [831] [776] consequently irreligious. Woman, or more precisely her unique ability to create, together with man's power to inseminate, has become a feature of native religion in these areas, crystallized in the concept of the Mother, whom we see manifested in (for instance) the Kunapipi. The aura thus surrounding, and radiating from, this Fertility Mother has been extended in some degree to native women to-day.

121 794 773 776 Another problem arising from the study of the Kunapipi cult which needs detailed consideration, is that of individual origins. Throughout the greater part of the Territory, specific cults have been inspired either by one or, in some cases, by two or three Ancestral Beings. Through their own personality and power, it is said, they succeeded in indoctrinating the whole social group in which they found themselves. They brought with them what appear to have been new ideologies, with attendant ritual, emblems, songs, and mythology in which they themselves now play a dominant part. This individual aspect is apparent in the case of the Kunapipi Mother, who arose from the waters of the Roper River Mouth (*vide* Chapter XI), bringing with her the main features of what we now call the Kunapipi cult. The same principle is evident in the appearance of the Djanggawul (*vide* Chapter I) and of Laintjung (Chapter I) in north-eastern Arnhem Land; both these Beings appear to have inspired virile cults, substantiated by mythology which details their adventures, their activities and beliefs. The society itself, of course, must have been more or less receptive to the introduction of these religious beliefs. That is to say, the religious leader, whether Kunapipi, [182] Laintjung or the Djanggawul Brother or Sisters, was able to impress his (or her) own point of view on that society, which in turn was willing to adopt his views and ideas, so giving social impetus to the introduced religion.

This aspect of individual origins, in relation to specific Australian Aboriginal cults, is an important one. The contention, which may be substantiated by mythology and the traditional song-cycles, is that a powerful personality—such as the Great Mother, the acknowledged spiritual leader and inspiration of the Kunapipi cult—possessed of ability beyond the ordinary, can and does exert his or her influence on the society in which he is either temporarily or permanently living; and that influence, helped by favourable circumstances, is sufficient to establish a cult which attracts adherents, and becomes in its own right an important social function and institution.

121 771 773 794 776 The migration of Ancestral Beings, like Kunapipi and others, into a particular society, bringing with them a religious cult, is a fairly general phenomenon in Aboriginal religious life. Major Ancestral Beings very rarely arise in the country of the people with whom they are mythologically associated, or in the society which serves as the "incubator" for their specific ideology. Rather, the individual (in

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

the guise of an Ancestral Being) is the proselytizer, the carrier of the germ of a religious idea, which is adopted by, and modified to suit, the social group in which he finds himself. Whether he brought with him the ingredients of that religion from his own "home", or whether it took shape in consequence of his contact with the alien people, is a matter for conjecture.

The diffusion of Aboriginal religious cults, such as the Kunapipi, also presents some interesting features. A certain amount of more or less "pure" evangelization has occurred in this respect; individual cult leaders, of both historic and contemporary society, have been interested in furthering the activities of the cult. But in their successful and unsuccessful attempts to introduce their particular beliefs into other groups, they take only the basis of their cult life, and do not as a rule attempt to superimpose their own cultural ideas and organization. In north-eastern Arnhem Land, for example, the Kunapipi, recognized by natives themselves as an introduced theme, has been fairly well integrated with existing social organization, religious life, and secular beliefs; even its mythology has been altered to meet the demands of local ethics, while the alien songs are interpreted in the light of indigenous criteria. Nevertheless, the basic ideology and construction of the Kunapipi cult remain: and it is this aspect which really concerns the proselytizer. The same process may be observed in other regions, such as western Arnhem Land, the Daly River–Port Keats area, and west-central Northern Territory.

* * * *

A word should be said concerning the presentation of Kunapipi Song Cycles (that is, in Chapters VII, VIII, X, and XI). Their value lies in their substantiation of the cult's doctrine, explaining its outward expression in ritual and in the use of ceremonial emblems and objects. Such traditional songs ensure that the original intent of the cult is not lost or radically misinterpreted. To-day, however, misinterpretation is possible as a result of conflicting loyalties arising from the contact of Aboriginal with European culture. In order to restrict ourselves to the literal interpretation of these songs, it has been found necessary to present them with an interlinear translation, a general rendering, and a brief commentary based on native interpretation: this method makes available the maximum amount of data. The phonetic script used conforms to that of the International Phonetic Association,[2] amended for use in Australia by Dr. A. Capell.[3]

2. G. Noel-Armfield, *General Phonetics*, 1931, pp. 21–23. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, "A Preliminary Report of Field-Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia", *Oceania Bound Reprint*, Sydney, 1945, pp. 262–264, or *Oceania*, Vol. XV, No. 1, pp. 50–52.
3. A. Capell, *Methods and Materials for Recording Australian Languages*, Sydney, 1945 (reprinted from *Oceania*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, pp. 144–176). Since the complete phonetic script was not available for rendering native words in this volume, some equivalents in ordinary English lettering have been used.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

Arnhem Land, social organization: the division of society into two groups (that is, moieties) was, with the kinship structure, the traditional norm. But within recent years the sub-section system has been introduced from the south and south-west, coming up the coast through Rose River and Blue Mud Bay. In the Milingimbi region it seems to have been introduced at an earlier date, through contact with the inland tribes, particularly the Reinbaranga. At Yirrkalla, however, the sub-sections are not yet completely co-ordinated with the kinship terminology, and among the older people are not in constant use. Certain sub-section terms are however mentioned from time to time in this work, in reference to Ancestral Beings; they will not be discussed in this context, and reference should be made to the work of L. Warner, T. T. Webb, A. P. Elkin and R. Berndt.[3]

c The Religious Quality of Yirrkalla Social Life:

Yirrkalla society, like most other Australian Aboriginal communities, whether of desert, hill or coast, must forage for its food, the abundance of which depends on the particular environment. On the north coast and rivers of Arnhem Land, food of many varieties is available in great quantities. In spite of this, however, its constant supply is said to depend on the rhythm of the seasons, upon the mythical characters of the Eternal Dreaming Period, and on the performance of associated ritual and ceremony. In order to ensure a constant supply of food, in the form of natural species generally, these aborigines rely on the great ceremonial cycles of *djunggawon*, *kunapipi*, *ngu:rlmak*, and the *dua* and *jiritja nara* cycles which are usual in this region. These rituals, associated with the principal Ancestral Beings such as Djanggawul, Wauwalak, Laintjung, Banaitja and Baijini, are the basis of indigenous religion. But they are not concerned merely with the provision of food. Their purpose is, primarily, to ensure the continuation of the human species; the increase of all other animals, birds, fish, vegetable matter, and so on, is only an adjunct to the main theme.

This religion then is a dominant quality in Yirrkalla life, and is reflected in all its institutions and conventional forms of behaviour. It concerns itself with the fructification of all living things, and in that category human beings themselves are considered the most important. As, however, the Kunapipi cult is especially concerned with their rhythmic sequence of birth and rebirth, it is crystallized in a definite concept of a Fertility Mother. Moreover, the cult is concerned with the coming and going of the seasons, the appearance and disappearance of vegetable and plant matter, and the propaga-

3. *Vide* L. Warner, *op. cit.* 1937, pp. 116–124, and his Morphology and Functions of the Australian Murngin Type of Kinship, *American Anthropologist*, n.s. 33, 2, 184; T. T. Webb, *op. cit.* pp. 406–408; A. P. Elkin, *op. cit.* pp. 412–416; R. Berndt, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*, Chap. 1.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

tion of other natural species—all phenomena which are necessary for the continuance and well-being of the people themselves. In keeping with this doctrine, a natural development has been the stress on procreation—the importance of pregnancy and child-birth, and the essential sequence of sexual intercourse and conception, expressed particularly in ritual and long song cycles.

In order to understand Kunapipi cult life and belief, it is necessary to summarize very briefly some of the other cults which flourish beside it in this area.

The Djanggawul myth, consisting of several hundreds of lengthy songs, relates the adventures of two men and two women, who in the Dreaming Period landed at Port Bradshaw, on the north-east Arnhem Land coast. They had journeyed across the sea from an island called Bralku, now known as the *dua* home of the dead, somewhere beyond Groote Eylandt. These Ancestral Beings are known generally as the Djanggawul, but had their own personal names. The leader was Djanggawul himself; the two women were his sisters, the younger Maralaitj, and the older Pildjiwuraroiju; and their companion was Bralbral, who plays only a minor part in this great cycle. In their canoe they brought a large conical *ngainmara* mat, which is now used particularly by the women, and also certain sacred *rangga* sticks possessing life-giving qualities. The mat symbolized the uterus; the *rangga* sticks were penes, and when not being used ritually, were kept hidden in the *ngainmara*.

As the Djanggawul journeyed along the coast, they met other Ancestral Beings like Laintjung and the Baijini, and Spirits such as Pomapoma, Kultana, Woijal, Burulu-burulu and others; but none of these had the procreating powers of the great Djanggawul. Djanggawul had an elongated penis; and his two sisters had long clitori which dragged on the ground as they walked. Djanggawul had sexual relations with his sisters, so that they were continually pregnant. From time to time, at the camps where they stayed, he would lift their clitori to one side, and put his hand up into the uteri to remove many children of both sexes: these were the ancestors of the present aborigines. The song cycle features the perpetual pregnancy of the two sisters, their uteri being likened to the *ngainmara* mats which they brought with them, while the people who are removed from them in childbirth are the *rangga*. It is said that a person's bones are like *rangga*, inherited from both the father and mother, who in turn inherited theirs through the generations of ancestors, right back to the Eternal Times of Djanggawul and the creative heroes. Therefore, at death, a person's material remains, as well as his spiritual substance, must be treated with respect, and surrounded by ritual.

An important aspect of this myth, second only to the theme of fertility, concerns the institution of sacred ritual. In the beginning,

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER II

KUNAPIPI, THE SACRED CULT

171 794 Throughout Arnhem Land, and the Northern Territory south of Yirrkalla, around and below the Roper River; west across the plains and swamps of the Buffalo country to the Daly River, and beyond, towards Port Keats and Timber Creek, and further west into Western Australia; south-west into the central cattle country around Victoria River Downs, Wave Hill, Gordon Downs, towards Hall's Creek in the Eastern Kimberleys; through inhospitable desert regions around Tanami and the Granites, and eastwards across the main North-South Road; through the tribal territories of groups with differing cultures and language—the sacred name of Kunapipi is known.

The Kunapipi Cult is diffused over an immense area, and is known sometimes by alternate names; but though its rituals and ceremonies may differ in some minor points, and its doctrine may vary, its intent remains fundamentally the same, and its background is similar throughout all these areas.

In north-eastern Arnhem Land, the name Kunapipi expresses a dual concept: on the one hand it refers to a Fertility Mother, or Mothers, and on the other to the great Rainbow Snake. This is the symbolism of the Uterus and the Penis, natural instruments of fecundity. In other areas, such as the Daly River, or central-western Northern Territory, the term Kunapipi (although still known) changes to Kulwadi, or to Kadjari, translated into English as "Old Woman", or described as "Mother belonging to you and me". In the north-western and central-western regions of the Northern Territory, more stress is placed on the concept of a Fertility Mother, and less on the Rainbow Snake. In the Milingimbi region, when discussing the Kunapipi,[1] Professor Lloyd Warner accentuates the importance of the great Rock Pythons who swallowed the Wauwalak Sisters, but overlooks the underlying significance of the Two Sisters as Fertility Mothers.

171 776 794 773 Throughout the areas mentioned, a basic feature of Aboriginal religion is the belief in an Original Mother (or Mothers), herself a Creative Being and the essence of fertility and abundance. In western Arnhem Land the Mother is the inspiration and sponsor of the *u:ba:r* (equivalent to the north-eastern Arnhem Land *awar* of the

1. L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, 1937, pp. 290-311, and 372-375.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
O117 Muragin O117

aguridjuk ritual) and *ma'rain* cults;[2] on Bathurst and Melville Islands the Earth Mothers are said to have brought into being the human and natural species, and to have introduced their system of social organization. The now virtually extinct Laraki:a shared this same cult; and so did the Daly River people who built circular stone structures to symbolize the wombs of their creative Mothers.[3] The cult of Kalwadi is still strong in the north-western quarter of the Territory; as the Kadjari, it spreads down to the central-west, where it is met by another Kadjari cult from the Tanami-Granites desert, and the Billaluna region in Western Australia.

This Mother[3] is always present behind the ritual, the dancing and the singing. She is a symbol of the productive qualities of the earth, the eternal replenisher of human, animal and natural resources; it was from her uterus that human and totemic beings came forth. She has no totem herself, nor is she a totemic concept; she does not herself perform totemic ritual, although her neophytes do. In these areas, she is the background of all totemic ceremony, an "eternal" explanation and symbol of the Aboriginal way of life, with its continual expectation of rebirth.

In her sacred mythology she may be alone, or may appear as Two Sisters; or, in some areas, the Two Sisters may be described as her daughters. For example, from the Roper River westwards, through the Victoria River district into Western Australia, her daughters are the exotic and beautiful Mungamunga, representing an ideal of young aboriginal womanhood. Although the Mungamunga are themselves associated with their Mother in sacred ritual (see Chapters X and XI), they do not play an important part; they are concerned principally with secret magico-religious ceremonies of women, and with love magic of both sexes.

The Mother herself, Kunapipi, Kalwadi or Kadjari, is represented in certain parts of the mythology as a perpetually pregnant woman, who in the Dream-Time let out from her uterus human beings, the progenitors of the present natives. She was responsible too for sending out spirits of the natural species from season to season, to ensure their continual increase. In this she did not act entirely alone, but in association with a Rainbow Snake, the symbolic Penis, which completed the dual concept. This aspect is particularly important, for it reflects the part played by the male in fertilization.

In a remarkable series of drawings from central-western Northern

2. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land* (volume to be published by the Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, New York), Chapter IV, Sections I to VIII.
3. Knut Dahl, *In Savage Australia*, London, 1926, pp. 233-4, figs. 9-10 This writer records stone structures in the vicinity of the Mary River, in "Buffalo country", west of the western Arnhem Land fringe.
3. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, The Eternal Ones of the Dream, *Oceania*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, pp. 67-78, illustrated (3 plates).

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

Territory,[4] artists depict human beings, as totemites, flowing from the uterus of the Mother into the round "ring place" (or ceremonial ground) for the performance of sacred rites. The "ring place" is itself the uterus of the Mother. To-day, in the really important sacred ceremonies, a special ring place is used for the performance of these rituals. As the neophytes leave the camp for the sacred ground, they themselves are said to become increasingly sacred, and to enter the Mother; they go into her uterus, the ring place, as happened in the beginning. When the ritual is completed the Mother "lets them out"; they emerge from the ring place, and pass once more into ordinary life. These ring places vary in shape from place to place, but all symbolize the Mother's uterus. The sacred ceremonies associated with this Fertility Woman are called in pidgin English "Big Sunday", inferring a sacred atmosphere from the European connotation of the word Sunday, while the term refers also to "sandy place", the soft ground upon which the sacred dancing is performed. The appellation "Big Sunday", in some regions, may also be derived from the term "Centre" place, which refers to the sacred ceremonial ground.

All Kunapipi ritual, irrespective of region, has thus a common theme. We find in it the return to the Mother's uterus, and the eventual emergence, when the postulants come out from their sacred ritual refreshed, and as "new" men (that is, it is like a "rebirth"): this symbolic enactment of birth brings with it a renewal of ideals, energy and faith. Fertility and the supplying of food, sexual pleasure and satisfaction, solidarity within the group, and an undividing faith in the divine truth of the cult—all these elements are present. Food and sex, fundamental in human life, and consequently in religion, owe their continuance, it is said, to the Eternal Mother. It is not surprising that people living in such close proximity to nature, with few artificial distractions, should recognise the fundamental importance of female fertility, and see in it a central theme of religion.

* * * *

In north-eastern Arnhem Land, the Kunapipi cult is not yet deeply entrenched, since it has been introduced within comparatively recent times. Its earliest infiltration took place through the Reinharanga (sometimes termed Rembranga, and localized in south-western Arnhem Land) and Burera tribes and so into Milingimbi, where Professor L. Warner witnessed some of its rituals twenty years ago. From this centre it spread westwards towards Goulburn Islands and Oenpelli,[5] and eastwards to Elcho Island and Arnhem Bay. But it does not seem to have gripped, at that time, the imagina-

4. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *op. cit. Oceania*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, Plates I to III; and R. and C. Berndt, Aboriginal Art in Central-Western Northern Territory, *Meanjin*, Spring, 1950, pp. 183–188, ten plates.
5. R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, Chapter IV, Section IX.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OII7 Murngin OII7

tion of the people further east, around Yirrkalla, Cape Arnhem and Caledon Bay.

It was not until perhaps fifteen years ago that the cult gradually spread northwards from Rose River, where its custodians were the Nungguboiju group who had obtained it from the Roper River people, particularly from the Mangarei-Ma:ra-Alawa tribes. The Lultma'rangu (*dua* moiety), Dalwongu and Mararba (*jiritja* moiety) linguistic groups were the first to come within its influence; they mixed with people from Rose River to perform Kunapipi ceremonies around Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, and occasional Kunapipi rituals were held round about Yirrkalla.

But although these people did perform the Kunapipi at relevant seasons, this did not take the place of indigenous religious belief and practice. The great ceremonies of the *dua* and *jiritja* moiety *nara* were still the most important; and the *djunggawon* and *ngu:rlmak* rituals, associated with the two Wauwalak Sisters and the Rock Pythons, retained their importance in the minds of the north-eastern people. Kunapipi in this area was subsidiary, whereas in most of the other areas mentioned above her rituals held a paramount position.

The introduced Kunapipi cult brought with it all its attendant ritual and ceremonial activity, but apparently its original mythology (see Chapters IX and X) became merged with that of the Wauwalak.[6] It was, in consequence, more readily accepted by the local people, for the Wauwalak myth-cycle embraces much of the indigenous religion. Thus, instead of becoming just another introduced ceremony, the Kunapipi became a cult associated with a series of cults, having roots in indigenous mythology. The Wauwalak mythology had much in common with that of the southern Kunapipi. Both possessed the same concept of fertility. The Wauwalak sisters became indirectly the dual Mothers, continually replenishing the earth with human beings and with the natural species. Even the Rainbow Snake was presnt, i e the form of the Rock Pythons, who finally swallowed the Sisters. Fundamentally, too, the arrangement of the sacred dancing ground, and much of the incidental ceremony (when the special Kunapipi objects are not used) are similar to those of the *djunggawon* and *ngu:rlmak* rituals.

One aspect of the Kunapipi is slightly at variance with local indigenous belief. In north-eastern Arnhem Land the Fertility Mothers are the sisters of Djanggawul, Pildjiwuraroiju and Miralaitj. The Wauwalak, although associated with the idea of fertility, are not concerned with human or animal creation: they are said to be the daughters of the elder Djanggawul sister, removed from her uterus by her Brother. According to conventional Kunapipi mythology,

6. The Wauwalak mythology itself was introduced much earlier into north-eastern Arnhem Land, its original source being found in the mythology of the Kunapipi: *vide* Chapters IX and X.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OII7 Murngin OII7

184 the Mother (or Mothers), represented quite often by Two Sisters
773 even in central-western Northern Territory, is the creative Being;
776 so from this point of view the Wauwalak cycle, now substantiating
794 the introduced Kunapipi, should possess Two Sisters who are themselves creative Beings. Local belief however accords this status only to the Djanggawul; but since the Wauwalak are their daughters, the original doctrine is not greatly inconvenienced. The creative Mothers may still be the Djanggawul, making their appearance through the Wauwalak Sisters, while the Wauwalak themselves are the Mungamunga of the south.

773 The actual meaning of the name Kunapipi is not easy to discover.
794 The cult itself, with its relevant ceremonies, and the myth that substantiates the ritual, is Kunapipi, and this, in most areas mentioned
796 above, is translated as the "Mother", or "Old Woman". The term "old" in this context signifies status and age, although not elderly appearance. Dr. Warner[7] notes that Kunapipi (spelt "Gunabibi") is
[114] one name of the Pythons which swallowed the Wauwalak; but, as mentioned above, this writer stresses the importance of the Snakes at the expense of the Fertility Mothers, and this element is by far the most apparent in north-eastern Arnhem Land religion.

192 At Yirrkalla, the name Kunapipi is said to have two meanings.
304 First, the word Kunapipi means "whistle-cock" (that is, a sub-
83 incisure); for these ceremonies came up from the Rose and the
[171] Roper Rivers where subincision is general, whereas throughout the greater part of north-eastern Arnhem Land only circumcision is practised. The ceremonies of Kunapipi in the Yirrkalla region may also be termed *wiri:i* or *wira'i*, meaning "incisure". But Kunapipi means also the uterus of the Mother. That is, the incised penis symbolizes the snake (Python or Rainbow Snake), and the incisure itself the uterus. Symbolically, then, the subincised male member represents both the female and the male organs, essential in the process of fructification.

More generally, however, the term Kunapipi is said to mean the Mother, and in isolated cases the Snake, both being accepted versions. It is because Kunapipi is translated as Fertility Mother, through the greater part of the Northern Territory, that we have preferred to use that appellation.

794 A number of ceremonies throughout the northern half of the
796 Northern Territory are associated with Fertility Mothers and Rain-
184 bow (or Great) Snakes; and it is possible that the majority of these cults are linked with one another, even if their outward expressions are dissimilar. This aspect requires intensive study, including the collection of mythological texts, and analysis of relevant ritual and songs. The Kunapipi cult, however, consists of certain distinctive elements, that are found throughout the areas we have mentioned.

7. L. Warner, *op. cit*, p. 294.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

For example, the Kunapipi held at Yirrkalla is essentially similar to that held at Birrundudu (towards the Western Australian border in central-western Northern Territory). There is the spasmodic use of bullroarers; the sacred ground itself is the uterus of the Mother; a sacred well (*nanggaru*) is dug on the dancing ground; a crescent-shaped trench (*kanala*) is made later; *jelmalandji* "posts" are erected, immense structures symbolizing the Pythons; there is the exchange of wives and gifts, with ceremonial intercourse; and the forked posts, called the *djepalmandji*, are used towards the termination of the rituals. These are features of all Kunapipi, Kulwadi and Kadjari ceremonies.

A word may be said too of the songs that are used in the Yirrkalla-Rose River Kunapipi Cycle.[8] These are mostly of the short conventional type common throughout most of Aboriginal Australia,[9] and their words serve as "key" patterns suggesting and inferring ideas, rather than providing detailed description. This form of song structure is, like the Kunapipi, alien to north-eastern Arnhem Land, where usually songs are very lengthy, description is detailed and repetitious, and separate cycles contain several hundreds of songs (or verses). Secular and magico-religious *tjaruda* love songs, which are often associated incidentally with the sacred Kunapipi (for they are sometimes connected with the Mungamunga), have also found their way up through Rose River to north-east Arnhem Land, and have retained their own song-structure against much local opposition from semi-indigenous forms.[10]

The major theme in all Kunapipi ritual is the natural cycle of reproduction and fertility. Fertility, as expressed in reproduction, seasonal fluctuation, periods of plenty and scarcity, is symbolized in the ceremonies associated with animals, birds and plants, their mating, copulating and bearing offspring in their proper seasons. The essential factor of mating and copulating, as a step towards reproduction, is crystallized in ceremonial copulation on the sacred ground. And ever present, "eternally" watchful and omnipotent, is the Great Mother, the essence of fecundity, in whose divine power rests the strength to animate and increase both human beings and the natural species. The performance of rituals attracts her interest, and brings into motion her protecting influence, which ensures a continuation of the world that her neophytes know, and the unbroken sequence of the seasons upon which they depend for their livelihood.

8. *Vide* Chapters VII and VIII of this work.
9. R. Berndt, A Wonguri-Mandjikai Song Cycle of the Moon Bone. *Oceania*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, pp. 16-50.
10. *Vide* R. Berndt, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*. In this work a Rose River Love Song Cycle and the *tjaruda* are detailed and discussed.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER III

MYTHOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE KUNAPIPI

The myth that substantiates Kunapipi ritual in this north-eastern region is thus concerned with the two Wauwalak sisters; and this same myth (as mentioned in Chapter I *c*) serves to explain two other indigenous rituals, the age-grading *djunggawon* ceremony, and the "higher" religious ritual of *ngu:rlmak*. Each of these three ceremonies, the *djunggawon*, the *kunapipi* and the *ngu:rlmak*, emphasizes some particular feature of this myth. But at the same time, to understand thoroughly the Kunapipi ritual and symbolism it is necessary to be acquainted with the complete Wauwalak myth. Even then, certain aspects must be interpreted, according to Aboriginal explanations, before their meaning can become apparent. Traditional symbolism in ritual, through long years of constant repetition, becomes so stylized that the original intent is sometimes obscured; it is often necessary, therefore, to interpret on the basis not only of mythology, but also of comparison with similar actions and symbols in other regions. However, in this small study we are concerned not so much with theoretical analysis, as with recording the structure and basis of the cult in this particular area, assisted by a glance at its expression in two neighbouring groups.

In north-eastern Arnhem Land, where most of the indigenous religious doctrine is expressed through the Djanggawul *dua* and the Laintjung-Bunaitja *jiritja* cycles, the Wauwalak series is not the most important. Again, to understand fully the importance of this concept of fertility it is necessary to realize the place of the Djanggawul Brother and Sisters in Yirrkalla sacred life, for they were responsible in the first place for the birth of the Wauwalak. The power of fructification, however, has been transmitted to the Two Wauwalak Sisters (*vide* Chapters I and II) with the introduction of the Kunapipi.

It is relevant to mention, in this context, that women play an important part in all sacred ritual in north-eastern Arnhem Land, where many of the rites are concerned with the reproductive function of womankind, and of female Ancestral (or Spirit) Beings. Women to-day are acquainted, although in many cases somewhat imperfectly, with the background of sacred ceremony and the underlying doctrines. Indeed, men stress the fact that in the Dreaming Period women initially possessed all sacred ritual, and lost it only through

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

the men's duplicity. This is particularly apparent in the Djanggawul myth (*vide*, for example, Chapters I and IV). Merely because they do not join in certain of the most sacred mysteries, women do not feel "left out" of things, or pushed aside into what has been termed by some writers a profane existence, with attendant feelings of inferiority. On the contrary, they realize that they have a supplementary function in maintaining camp dancing, and answering the men's ritualistic calls from the sacred ground. It is necessary, for instance, that they prepare food for the men at such times, and observe certain tabus. A woman must know her own totemic clan songs, inherited from her father, and to a lesser extent those of her mother, and be able to sing them on appropriate occasions. She must know the correct dance movements and steps to accompany the men's singing in the "outside" ceremonies, as well as in the sacred rituals where she has her own part to play. There is no jealousy of the men's performances alone on the sacred ground. The men, so women say, are performing these ceremonies not only for themselves, but for all the people in general. This is simply a normal extension of the sexual division of labour and activity.

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The story of the Wauwalak is rarely told in prose by a story-teller of this region. Usually it is transmitted from one group of men to another, through the generations, in ritual, accompanied by explanations, on the ceremonial ground. Moreover, the whole myth is related in the sacred "inside" Wauwalak cycle of some hundreds of songs, in two main series: the "inside" Bush cycle, and the "inside" seaside cycle, each describing in detail the adventures of the Sisters. There are also the "outside" (secular) Bush and seaside cycles, sung in the main camp to the dancing of women: these continue the story, and reveal many aspects of the myth. Each one of these songs is representative of the very best in native poetry,[1] which it is not possible to set down in the bare general translation presented here.

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The Wauwalak myth begins in a region usually unidentified (*vide* Chapter IX), said vaguely to be somewhere south in the "Bush". This means, perhaps, that the Wauwalak sisters came from the direction of the Roper River, the hypothetical home of the Kunapipi Mother and her two daughters, the Mungamunga. In any case, the Wauwalak came northwards at an early period, towards the mainland opposite the Crocodile Islands (that is, near Milingimbi), bringing with them the rituals of the *djunggawon* and *ngu:rlmak*. Then the myth itself became to some extent localized in northern Arnhem Land. It is on the mainland south of Milingimbi that the most sacred totemic sites connected with the Wauwalak are found:

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1. This is reserved for a detailed study of the Wauwalak Cycle in relation to the *djunggawon* and *ngu:rlmak* ceremonies.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

796 see the young initiates coming out of the bushes, emerging from the
881 uterus, all covered with red-ochre that symbolizes "the spring blood
778 of the Wauwalak". And the men call out to the women saying, "See those young men covered with the saliva of that Snake"; "but really," and the women are not officially supposed to know this, "they are covered with the spring blood". The women begin to call out, and return dancing to the main camp.

The *djepalmandji* are knocked down, and the young boys are taken to the men's camp. That night, "outside" Kunapipi songs are sung, and the men dance around the boys. Then with the men leading, and the initiates following, they all dance off in single file to the sacred ground.

Here the initiates' headbands are removed, and returned to the Kunapipi leader for use in the next rituals. After some sacred singing, all the men, together with the young boys, paint themselves [302] completely with red-ochre; at the same time, in the main camp, all the other men, women and children, whether *dua* or *jiritja*, do likewise. On everyone's back is outlined the Julunggul Snake, "so that [532] you can't see it". (The snake design is merged with the general red-ochring, so that only a bare outline is visible.) This design is sometimes extended across the chest or breasts, from left to right, to join the main snake pattern on the back; "in the beginning those Wauwalak did this, because of that big Julunggul". This painting is termed the "baptizing" (that is, ceremonial purification), and all are brushed with smoking ironwood branches which have been held in the fire.

The men return from the sacred ground to the main camp, and sitting in groups begin to sing the "outside" Kunapipi, while the women dance in the same way as they did during the first rituals. The young initiates return that evening to the single men's camp. The purification ceremony and singing may be held on succeeding evenings for about a week to a fortnight, when it is felt that sufficient precautions have been taken to prevent sickness.

This concludes the Yirrkalla Kunapipi ritual.

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773 Although we shall return in succeeding chapters to the ritual and
796 interpretation of the Kunapipi, it may be as well, at this juncture, to
794 survey briefly the foregoing material. It is apparent that Kunapipi ritual has been closely related to the Wauwalak mythology; this [805] expresses symbolically the aborigines' conception of an "eternal" sequence of the seasons, and the reproductive faculties of Nature, of which man is an incidental but dominating feature. This fundamental [776] belief is crystallized in a Fertility Mother (the Wauwalak as a transmutation of the Djangguwul) who embodies this concept, while the male representative of fructification also is present.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

The following Table summarizes these aspects.

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TABLE

		Materialistic Aspect of Yirrkalla Religion	Spiritual Aspect of Yirrkalla Religion
Fundamental Aspects		Nature; Seasons; Vegetable and animal growth; reproductive faculties of man; survival of the group; basic drives (for example, food and sex)	
Repositories of Divine Power		Djanggawul; the Wauwalak. (Concept of Fertility Mother and Penis Snake): alone capable of releasing the power which brings about continuation	Unquestioning faith
Expressions and Instruments	Mythology	Djanggawul and Wauwalak Cycles (explaining the power of the "Divine" Beings)	Ideology, Religious philosophy and meditation
	Ritual	Sacred ritual and ceremony (of which the Kunapipi is merely one aspect). An instrument by which the "divine" power is released	Absorption in ritual as a "divine" purpose (spiritual edification)
Achievement		Production of necessities for physical continuance and survival. (Maintenance of *status quo*)	Spiritual growth. (Laws and ideals based on the behaviour of the "divine" Beings)

Here we observe the belief that ritual, as an expression of the sacred mythology, releases the "power" vested in the Divine Ancestral Beings for the ultimate welfare of the tribal group. This is primarily a materialistic aim, for its specific intent is the production of necessities for the physical continuation and survival of the people, the bringing into force of an elaborate mechanism that expresses man's innate selfishness and egocentricity. But as an adjunct to this thesis, Yirrkalla religion has an underlying non-materialistic thread, that is an expression of spiritual growth. Based as it is on an unquestioning acceptance of the religious doctrine, a belief in the omnipo-

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6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

773 tence and immutability of the "eternal" Beings, a religious philos-
796 ophy has been developed among the mature "thinkers" of the group.
789 This finds its outlet in the mental exercise of meditation, interpre-
794 tation, and explanation, but is nevertheless restricted by the deep faith that is a living part of all its manifestations. Within the limitation of defined premises, a certain degree of flexibility is apparent; philosophic concepts have not remained static, nor ideology stagnant. Throughout the centuries of religious development, alien ideas [177] have been considered and discussed, even when they were unorthodox, and apparently opposed to indigenous theology. They have been accepted or discarded; but all have, in this way, served to illuminate and extend the basic principles which serve to explain to the aborigines man's place in his environment, and his inter-relationship with the "Divine" Beings who are possessed of the power of animation and are the seat of knowledge.

796 Several interesting points are raised in our description of Kunapipi ritual.

In all Kunapipi ceremonies, throughout the whole region mentioned in Chapter II, basic words referring to the sacred objects, ceremonies, and so on, are very much the same; for instance, *nanggaru*, *kanala*, *jelmalandji*, *djamala*, *gumagu*, and *djepalmandji*. [184] These terms serve as a connecting link, for their meanings do not change drastically from one area to another, even when, as at Yirrkalla, the Kunapipi ritual itself has been superimposed on a relatively indigenous theme. The dominating theory behind the Kunapipi has preserved, more or less intact, its original intent.

562 Another outstanding aspect is the important rôle undertaken by
796 women throughout the performance of the Kunapipi ceremonies. At no time do they feel themselves secluded from purely male activity, while at intervals they take an active part. They know that the rituals are principally concerned with peculiarly feminine functions, and that men are carrying out the more strenuous features of ceremonial life. "These rituals," said one informant, "are just like a man copulating with a woman, he does all the hard working so that the woman can carry out the really important business of childbirth." This may be a one-sided attitude, but it does adequately express local native reasoning in this matter. The question of whether women are profane, as opposed to the aura of sacredness pervading a male participant at such a ceremony, does not enter into Yirrkalla thinking. Even when ritually tabu because of afterbirth or [841] menstruation blood (as in the case of the Wauwalak at the sacred Muruwul billabong), a woman is regarded as sacred, for her blood and her other activities themselves are sacred, and are focal points in the religious doctrine. And all sacred ceremony, these aborigines [793] say, was inspired by women. "In the beginning men had nothing, and women possessed all the ritual; so men stole this from the women ..." —(Djanggawul and Wauwalak mythology).

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
O117 Murngin O117

. , ." — (Djanggawul and Wauwalak mythology). In any case, a cult such as the Kunapipi, which stresses fertility and reproduction, could not exclude women; as is normal in these matters, a certain sphere of ceremonial activity is allotted to each sex, while the women realize the important part played by their divine counterpart, the Wauwalak. 562 796 794

In the Kunapipi, however, women enter the sacred ground of the men; this is a feature that rarely occurs in the ceremonies associated with other cults. Upon entering the ground, the women themselves become more definitely *marelin* (sacred); "they take over from the men, and dance before them as if the men were only novices being introduced to their first sacred rituals". They re-enact something of what they themselves initially possessed in the mythological period, and what was stolen by the men. They use the sacred symbol of Julunggul, and the tree that was split by his lightning, and through their actions they represent the origin of the men's sacred bullroarer which no woman is supposed to see. They dance the ritual of the great Python, "and the men hang their heads in fear".[17]

On the termination of this ceremony, the women dance the lewd bandicoot dance on the sacred ground before the men, expressing symbolically the basic intent of the Kunapipi. They are stimulating both themselves and the men in order to carry out sexual intercourse, for copulation is the means by which fertility is achieved.

This brings us to an aspect that cannot be considered in detail here; that is, the problem of religious sexuality.[18] By this we mean the degree in which sex, as a stimulatory factor, enters into Kunapipi ritual. In most sacred aboriginal cult life, where sexual subjects are dealt with frankly and freely, there is no suggestion of actual individual stimulation, or of arousing the sexual inclinations of the participants: the ritual merely re-enacts some specific aspect of mythology which is related to erotic activity or coitus, and which is necessary for its effective completion, and for achieving the desired intent. The actors only carry out the symbolism associated with sexual activity. The arousing of sexual desire by sacred acting of this type would project into it a profane and irreligious content that would immediately detract from its real intent. Allowance for sexual stimulation by dancing, acting and singing has been made in the case of love magic ritual, or of collective male and female secular ceremonies that heighten sexual feelings and permit licence. 794 796 831 [832] [786]

17. This ceremony held by the women is similar to their secret magico-religious rituals in central-western Northern Territory. It is one aspect of the *Yaradu*, which has its sacred and secular expressions. From these secret rituals of the women, men are traditionally, and in present practice, excluded. *Vide* C. H. Berndt, *Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia*, L'Homme, Cahiers d'Ethnologie, de Geographie et de Linguistique, 1, Paris, 1950, pp. 1-65, text figs. See particularly Chapter V. [184] [113]
18. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, Chapter IV, Section XII.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

794 796 832 In the Kunapipi, however, a certain degree of sexual stimulation does occur, and is apparently sanctified, although it does not detract from the underlying religious content of the ritual. Sexual expression in the Kunapipi is conventionalized, and individual inclinations are channelized according to recognized standards and rules. There is no suggestion of an uncontrolled orgy; men and women, prior to and during ceremonial copulation, are stimulated to an inordinate degree, but they find an outlet for this in coitus with defined Kunapipi partners. Furthermore, this is not idle sensuality, catering merely for individual pleasure. And although this aspect is found outside the sacred ground in the Kunapipi ceremonial period, during intercourse between men and women who may or may not be Kunapipi partners, the sexual act is in this case unrelated to ritual or ceremony and is simply secular. On the sacred ground, between Kunapipi partners, the sexual act assumes sanctity: the participants are invested with a sacred aura, while the act itself is ritualized and substantiated by the religious doctrine. The act of coitus is carried out for a specific purpose; and individual pleasure, whether present or not, is incidental.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

Dreams are rarely "extraordinary"[1] when they occur in Yirrkalla life; they are related to the ordinary round of events, and are definitely not placed in the category of the supernatural. They are an adjunct of normal and conventional living; and just as a man's body and spirit have experiences in the waking life, so the spirit (separated now from material ties) has similar experiences (within the range of an individual's knowledge) in the dreaming sphere, where time and space are ignored. The aborigines' theory is that the spirit, during sleep, is released from the body, and during a dream wanders in timeless space, into the stream of the Eternal Dreamtime.

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We may turn now to our main theme, the Kunapipi dreams, for the general question of Yirrkalla dream life requires a separate study.

Only three Kunapipi dreams will be considered here: these, among the many hundreds of dreams recorded, were the only ones really relevant to this discussion. Most of those dreams which referred to sacred and ceremonial aspects were associated with other Wauwalak rituals, like the *djunggawon* and *ngu:rlmak*, but more particularly with the "higher" sacred emblems and ritual of Djanggawul, Laintjung and Banaitja and so on. The reason for this paucity of Kunapipi dreams is possibly that this cult has not as yet a really firm grip of the people's minds, as have more typically indigenous forms. It consists, as we have said, of introduced ritual superimposed on traditional mythology, and from that consideration alone would not be so deeply ingrained in the culture as other and far older local rituals. On the other hand, the three dreams set out here were inspired by lengthy conversations on various aspects of the Kunapipi. Later, when certain Kunapipi ceremonies were in operation, and a great many people of both sexes were brought into the sphere of its influence, it was not possible to record dreams. We may assume, however, that the performance of the Kunapipi would produce related dreaming; for while other ceremonies were being held, it was found that all those concerned invariably had relevant dreams. An important adjunct in the study of native religious life should be the analysis of informants' and participants' dreams; this should not be confined to one sex alone, for we have shown elsewhere the important part played by women, particularly in the Fertility cults, and their dreams reflect their approach to ceremonial (as well as to secular) life.

These Kunapipi dreams belonged to two men. One was Banggalawi,[2] a *dua* Djambarpingu *nuta*, Ralwia *mala* man, a middle-aged ceremonial headman, well versed in both Djanggawul and Wauwalak ritual, and a leader of the Milingimbi Kunapipi side. The other

1. L. Warner's Appendix on Dreams (*op. cit.* pp. 511-12) is inadequate.
2. The Bengaliwo of L. Warner, *op. cit.* pp. 68, 182 *et seq.*

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

The other

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was Gumuk (*vide* Chapter V), an unmarried middle-aged *jiritja* Dalwongu *mata*, Biringal *mala* man, who had homo-sexual tendencies but did engage in normal sex relations. Most of his attention was focused on sacred ritual; he was the representative of the Rose River Kunapipi, to the local headmanship of which he aspired. Since we are interested here only in the actual context of the dreams, as an aid to amplifying our previous chapter on ritual, we will not set out the case histories of these men; this would be necessary only if we were analysing fully the dream sequences of each man over the full period of recording. Both these informants were able men, fully acquainted with all aspects of Kunapipi ritual, and qualified to interpret its symbols and conventional expressions.

First comes the translation of Banggalawi's dream.[3]

"I was dreaming about Kunapipi. We had gone out to the sacred ground, where we made a *kanala* (the *ba'uma* of Chapter IV). We opened the veins of our arms and poured the blood into a large shell, and began to stick eagle-hawk down around our waists. When we had finished decorating, we *dua* men got up and 'took dancing' for those *gulwiri* palms.

3. Reference: Book 18, Series A, Feb. 5th, 1947, R.B.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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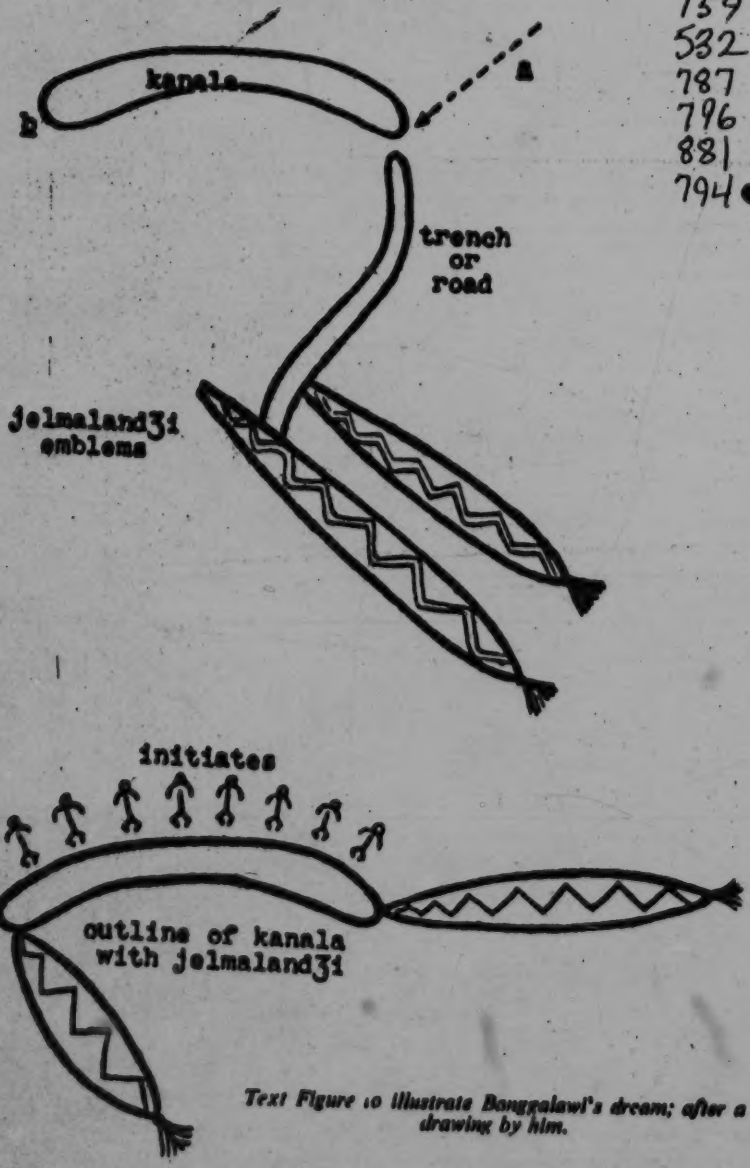

Text Figure 10 illustrates Bonggalawl's dream; after a drawing by him.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER XII

FINALE

The foregoing chapters have indicated something of the fundamental doctrine of the Kunapipi cult, based as it is on the essential human and animal drives of food and sex, and including such important aspects as the maintenance of food supplies, and procreation, necessary for the continuation of both the human and natural species. In this respect the Kunapipi religious cult is not unlike many others that express the hopes and desires of simple and sophisticated peoples alike. And even when its principal intent is materialistic, it does not exclude spiritual conceptions: in fact, these latter are of major importance.

Here, in Aboriginal Australia, among contemporary aborigines, exists this vivid and vital cult, expressing their own religious view of life: it is correlated with their traditional background and social institutions, and so intimately concerns their spiritual personality structure. Moreover, it is well adapted to their particular environment, since the great Spirit Beings themselves are associated with the country the aborigines know and love; and each man, woman and child has a part in this religious concept, for he (or she) is akin to the Mother. That is to say, their religion is a response to their particular material and spiritual requirements, in such a way that it is a very real and important aspect of each person's life. There is no sharp demarcation between secular and sacred life, because the one is so closely interwoven with the other. This religious concept, too, is not confined to men; it is equally important and significant to women. Each sex has its own particular sphere of activity and interest.

The religion of an indigenous native group, which has had little or no alien contact, is a living faith, something quite inseparable from the pattern of everyday life and thought.

With the introduction of alien ideas, through intensive European contact, this fundamental faith is shattered to a greater or lesser degree, according to the intensity and type of that contact. In most parts of Arnhem Land where Missions have been established, there is the impact of Christian teaching, of ideals which are not intimately concerned with the life of the native people, which often contrast sharply with indigenous traditional themes, and which belong to a strange and different cultural background. The repercussions of this impact, therefore, are frequently severe.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

Christianity, with its attendant ritual and belief, is apparently inseparable, in this context, from Western European culture, and for that reason it assumes a dominant and militant aspect. The indigenous culture, however, lacking the other's wide range of material objects and technology, and the subtleties of fanatic evangelization, seems as a rule powerless to resist.

Missionaries on the north coast of Arnhem Land and elsewhere in this region have made little attempt to understand the underlying motives of native ideology and their religious view of life. The majority (with a couple of exceptions) contend that Aboriginal religion is not a religion in the strict sense of the word, for to most of them religion is translatable only in terms of Christianity. With this conventional bias, they see only certain superficial aspects of such cults as the Kunapipi,[1] which they have not attempted to link with fundamental belief. They have not appreciated the importance of the Fertility Mother and the Rainbow Snake, nor the stress on certain erotic features. Ceremonial copulation is viewed as debauchery and unbridled lust, while women are said to live in virtual terror of the use which is made of them at such a time. In our study of the Kunapipi cult, as it normally functions, we have observed a different picture.

It is not our purpose here, however, to defend Aboriginal religious belief and activity, nor to discuss the relevant virtues of each religion. We need mention only that in the region under discussion the impact of Christianity, as presented by the Missions, has produced some change in the indigenous religion. Moreover, change of this kind has been brought about not only through the active interference of the Church, but through the gradual and indirect introduction of European secular concepts. The Mission is not only an agency for the Christian religion. It is the vanguard too of all the more materialistic elements which attend European cultural life; for Christianity means, to most, Europeanization. The balanced life and economy of the aborigines has been irrevocably upset, with resulting disorganization. The Kunapipi too has suffered, and is rarely seen in its entirety to-day, although its basic rituals and concepts have as yet (in Arnhem Land for example) remained relatively unaltered. Its adherents have, however, been driven to secrecy; and its ceremonies are for the most part carried out in the bush, away from Mission Stations and settlements. Ceremonial copulation has been frowned upon by the Missions, and in some cases this element of the Kunapipi is either omitted altogether or carried out surreptitiously.

On the other hand, the Missions' almost unanimous opposition to

1. The question of sexual behaviour in particular, seems to arouse strong reactions, when the indigenous culture offers manifestations that differ widely from accepted European conventions. It is apparently simpler in this case to condemn, than to study and investigate without prejudice.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

Kunapipi performances has served to strengthen native belief in its efficacy; but this tendency will last only as long as do the members of "the older generation".

By the driving underground, so to speak, of the Kunapipi, its sexual element has become considerably accentuated. In some cases, ritual copulation has lost a certain proportion of its sacred aura and serves as an excuse for promiscuity. This aspect is particularly apparent in contact areas where detribalization has taken place, and intensive cultural disintegration has resulted.

For example, on war-time Army Settlements during 1944–46 the performance of the Kunapipi (or "Big Sunday", as it was called) was forbidden by Civil and Army authorities alike, on the grounds that the big religious ceremonies entailed interruption of normal work. As a result of this prohibition very few of the sacred ceremonies were carried out, although a number were performed surreptitiously some distance from the Settlements, and were consequently of brief duration. One development of this external control was the accentuation of sexual promiscuity through the medium of the "Big Sunday", and the indiscriminate use of sacred tabus for the materialistic ends of a minority. In the latter case, food, clothing, and other goods were sometimes declared sacred, and could in this way be taken over by the person or the group pronouncing the tabu.

Whole areas of the settlement would, unknown to the womenfolk, be declared ritually sacred to men: latrines, washing-sheds, camps, roads and so on were pronounced tabu-ed to women. A woman inadvertently entering the demarcated area would be threatened with punishment, which she could avert through payment of goods or sexual favours: usually, of course, she preferred to "pay" with coitus.

This practice reached such proportions that Settlement officers endeavoured strongly to oppose it, and cited it as an additional reason for prohibiting the Kunapipi ceremonies; nevertheless the habit persisted, and seems to have aroused interest and enjoyment among both men and women. On the Daly River, west of Darwin, a rather similar practice has become institutionalized, in attempts to reinforce a religious life which is fast disappearing because of the disrupting effects of local European contact over a comparatively long period. Other examples, too, could be brought forward to confirm this particular distortion of "Big Sunday" religion.

But these features are abnormal; they have been brought about by circumstances beyond the control of the natives themselves, and represent merely one unpleasant result of uncontrolled or badly planned contact between two widely differing cultures. They would not normally appear, for they are not a part of indigenous religious life.

We might well ask what is the future of a cult like the Kunapipi.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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Can it continue to exist in its present form, in a situation of culture contact? Example has shown that under abnormal circumstances, when the inroads of an alien culture have attacked the social structure of the indigenous society, its survival odds are relatively low. Collapse of Aboriginal community life brings disillusionment, loss of faith in accepted doctrines, and consequent maladjustment. That is to say, as contact becomes more intensive, a cult of the Kunapipi variety will become correspondingly corrupted, and its principal intent will be overshadowed by the distortion of certain aspects which will inevitably serve to destroy it completely.

On the other hand, a cult of this type, which so adequately fulfils an aboriginal's religious requirements within his own cultural environment, is so much a part of his material and psychological make-up, and expresses the basic urges and necessities of his life, should surely find some place in his changing society, among widening interests. This should ideally be the case if the aboriginal is to retain something of his individuality, and not become merely a stereotyped imitation of the European. But this ideal form of adaptation is not to be found in North Australia to-day, and there are no indications that it will be so in the future. Although the indigenous religious faiths still retain their full significance in some areas, in others they are gradually changing, and their hold on the people's life is weakening. In some regions they are merely a shadow of their former selves, distorted to meet the selfish aims of a few maladjusted and frustrated tribal remnants.

Still, however, in outlying camps where aboriginal life proceeds comparatively undisturbed (and there are few such areas to-day) the twirling bullrourer is heard, and the answering call of the women; there is rhythmic singing, and the stamping of dancing feet on the sacred ground echoes through the quietness of the Bush. People have come together to renew their faith, to refresh themselves spiritually, and to ensure that the continuity of the seasons is maintained, as well as the continuance of the life they know and appreciate. The pervading influence of the Great Mother is, to them, a reality.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

APPENDIX 1

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In the main body of this work some mention has been made of ceremonial copulation during the performance of the Kunapipi. Our examples were taken principally from north-eastern and southern Arnhem Land, with reference to the Roper River region; and for comparison with these the following data from western Arnhem Land are presented.

During our field work in the western Arnhem Land region, at the Goulburn Islands and Oenpelli, little reference was made to the Kunapipi ceremonies;[1] it was said that these were introduced by [177] Reinbaranga people from the south and south-east, in the direction of the Roper River, or that they came from the Milingimbi area to the east.

Recently, however, the writer's chief informant at South Goulburn [115] Island, a Maung man named Small Ngolaman (or Nangolominj), who is incidentally one of the very few literate aborigines on the north coast of the Northern Territory, and who has been "keeping track" of certain problems in the region during our absence, writes that the Kunapipi is known to some of the mainland men who visit Goulburn Island. The Kunapipi, as we are already aware, is carried out in the vicinity of Oenpelli, and in the upper Liverpool River area, under the auspices of Reinbaranga or Milingimbi leaders, and is known (but not practised) at Goulburn Island.

Small Ngolaman's preliminary statement[2] reveals some very interesting features: for example, the use of one girl on the sacred ground needs more accompanying data, since it bears a striking similarity to the more western type, as carried out by the old Laraki tribe; this will however be dealt with later. Ngolaman's informant [115] was a Maung man, named Inmindjur.

"Messengers are sent out, notifying the various groups that the [203] Kunapipi is to be held. When the people come in to the ceremonial camp, the rituals begin. The Kunapipi headman chooses a young 794 girl, and takes her away from the main camp to the sacred ground. She is placed in a big bough shade or hut, recently built by the young 796 initiated men; she lies there on her back. Two holes are dug, one on 831 each side of her; a strong post is placed in each, and rammed

1. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, Chapter IV, Section IX.
2. *Correspondence* to R. Berndt, October 4th, 1948.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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right down. The girl's legs are tied to the posts, so that her legs are outstretched between them. (We know of no other reference to the actual tying down of the Kunapipi girl who has been chosen for ceremonial coitus. As a young girl is specified, this probably refers to ritual defloration which has been mentioned briefly elsewhere—*vide* Chapters IV, V and X. It suggests also that force is used to hold the girl, a feature which should not normally accompany this rite; moreover, promiscuity is such a feature of this area, with the breaking down of indigenous regulations governing sexual conduct, that one would not expect it to be necessary.)

The men then paint themselves, and line up for dancing. There may be two or three hundred men on the sacred ground. The headman begins to beat his clapping sticks, while the dancing men clap their hands rhythmically to the music and song, and call out intermittently. Then the first man, at the head of the long line of dancing men, leaves the line and goes into the shade and copulates with the Kunapipi girl; the other men continue clapping their hands and calling out.

Under the girl, immediately beneath her vulva, a small depression has been dug and in it has been placed a shallow paperbark dish; this catches the semen and vaginal juices that come out of the girl.

When the first man has left the hut, another takes his place; this is continued until all the men in the line have entered the hut and copulated, and their semen has flowed from the girl into the paperbark container.

By this time, the container is full; and after a rest, the men remove it from the hut and begin to paint themselves with the semen; then they continue their dancing, which goes on from early morning until sunset. Ceremonial coitus takes place each day for several weeks, different girls being chosen for each ceremony." Other rituals relating to the Kunapipi are also performed in a sequence similar to that already discussed.

It should be mentioned that the reason given for thus decorating the postulants' bodies with designs in semen and vaginal juices is the belief in the fructifying potency of the former. The act of ceremonial coitus is itself symbolic of fertilization, and the subsequent increase of human and the natural species; semen is the essence which causes pregnancy; and this natural and logical belief is an integral part of the rituals of the Kunapipi fertility cult.

There is also an association between semen and the saliva of the Julunggul Snake (*vide* Chapter III, *et seq.*); it was with this substance that Julunggul smeared the Wauwalak and the child prior to swallowing. This "saliva" is represented by white pipe-clay in parts of the Kunapipi, and it is with this that Kunapipi neophytes are painted.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

Since writing this book, the author and his wife have been able to spend a further period of anthropological research (1949-1950) in western Arnhem Land around Oenpelli, and in central-northern Arnhem Land about Milingimbi Island in the Crocodile Group.

At Oenpelli the complete series of Kunapipi rituals was seen twice through, photographed, and descriptions recorded; to supplement this, a mass of data was collected in relation to Kunapipi song cycles and mythology (mostly in interlinear text). The Oenpelli rituals relating to this cult have been introduced to this area within recent years, and were under the direction of ceremonial headmen with Gunwinggu affinities, whose home territory lay further to the south-east towards south-western Arnhem Land (the source of the Liverpool and Wilton Rivers). The cult had been brought into north-central Arnhem Land from the south on the one hand, and from north-central Arnhem Land via the source of the Liverpool on the other. The rituals witnessed by the author were the first complete series ever performed at Oenpelli; a number of adult Gunwinggu men (otherwise fully initiated) passed through them as "novices", being obliged to undertake all the customary and relevant obligations. The first series was held about half-way through the monsoonal season, and the second a little before the onset of the dry weather.

In the Milingimbi region full groups of songs relating to the Kunapipi were recorded, together with all relevant data.

The above will be discussed and presented in a future volume dealing with the regions concerned.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

FOREWORD

THE Djanggawul religious cult of north-eastern and north-central Arnhem Land has been selected for detailed study because it is more important to the Aborigines themselves than other religious cults in that region. It is older established than, for example, the well-known Wauwalak cycle[1] which sponsors the *djunggawon*, *kunapipi* and *ngurlmag* rituals. The Wauwalak themselves are really the daughters of the Djanggawul, while the *kunapipi* and *ngurlmag* have both been introduced into eastern Arnhem Land. The Djanggawul myth substantiates and gives traditional sanction to the performance of its relevant rituals, known as the *dua nara*. *Dua* is the name of the moiety primarily concerned with this myth and its rituals; the opposite moiety, the *jiritja*, has a counterpart in the *jiritja nara*, sanctioned by Laintjung, an Ancestral Being who is usually described in conjunction with his son, Banaitja. The Djanggawul, Laintjung, Banaitja and the Wauwalak are the principal ancestral characters who, in eastern Arnhem Land, serve as institutors of religious ritual, dogma and behaviour. However, the Djanggawul Brother and Sisters are by far the most important of these. The *dua nara* Djanggawul cult is also more conservative than, for example, that of Laintjung and Banaitja, for the latter has admitted alien elements, whereas the former has remained, as far as we can ascertain, more purely traditional.

During the course of field work in the Yirrkalla region of north-eastern Arnhem Land, the importance of Djanggawul ritual and songs was brought forcibly to my attention. The Aborigines

[1] W. L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, New York, 1937, pp. 244-334. See also R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1951, Chapter III.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

Foreword

themselves considered the Djanggawul to be the dominant figures in the Ancestral Times, and this attitude was borne out in the reverence they gave and the attention they paid to all features relating to the Djanggawul. Even those of the opposite moiety, people who looked to Laintjung and Banaitja, admitted the primary importance of the *dua* Djanggawul. I was fortunate, during this period, in being able to examine and record a number of versions of Djanggawul mythology from a relatively wide range of informants, the majority of whom were ceremonial headmen for their particular linguistic groups, and in addition to record in detail the greater part of the associated song cycle. I was able also to attend most of the *dua nana* rituals that took place during my visit. My knowledge of these rituals and songs was considerably enhanced later after a further visit to the north-central region, Milingimbi, where the Djanggawul song cycle was again obtained in detail, and relevant rituals observed.

The social organization and the culture of eastern Arnhem Land have already been treated partially in other works,[1] so that there is no need here for repetition. The reader is warned, however, that he will find it necessary to refer to these for information on various points such as the *dua-jiritja* moiety system, the clan and linguistic group organization, marriage rules, economic background and natural resources of this region, and so on, which although relevant to this study cannot here be treated in full. Arnhem Land is to-day an Aboriginal Reserve in the north-eastern region of the Northern Territory of Australia,[2] and a similar cultural pattern extends from Blue Mud Bay in the south-east to Cape Stewart on the north-central coast. That is to say, all the Aborigines within this area (approximately 1,500 to 2,000) possess a common social organization and religious ideology, and speak varying dialects of one

[1] *Vide* L. Warner, *op. cit.*, 1937; also, by the same author, 'Morphology and Functions of the Australian Murngin Type of Kinship', *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 33, 2, 184; T. T. Webb, 'Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land', *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4; A. P. Elkin, 'Marriage and Descent in East Arnhem Land', *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 412–16, and his 'The Complexity of Social Organization in Arnhem Land', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1–20; W. E. Lawrence and G. P. Murdock, 'Murngin Social Organization', *American Anthropologist*, 1949, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 58–65; A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1950, and *University of Chicago Press*, 1950, pp. 20–7; R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1951, Chapter I *b*.

[2] For its geographical position and natural resources, see A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *op. cit.*, 1950, pp. 20–1, R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Chapter I *a*, and R. and C. Berndt, *Arnhem Land—Its History and Its People*, for publication, Cheshire, Melbourne. See also accompanying map to this volume.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

preliminary to pregnancy. Children in this area, for instance, are called *judu* (*jutu*, usually employed in a singular sense), or *djamarguli* (plural). The former word means 'semen'; that is, the child originated from the semen. The latter means 'through (or from) work'; to 'work' (*djama*) a female is to have coitus, and *djamarguli* is literally the 'result of working (or coitus)'.

Erotic references, then, in the Djanggawul cult merely conform to the accepted pattern. To say that the Aborigine is concerned unduly with the subject of sex, and derives a morbid satisfaction from constant direct or symbolic reference to it, it to distort the actual position. He is frankly interested in the workings of the human body, and in the satisfaction of its basic needs; and he recognizes the fundamental importance of the act, not only in ensuring the continuation of life, but also in helping to stabilize relations between members of both sexes, through their very interdependence. It is not unexpected, therefore, to find manifestations of this interest in Aboriginal religious emblems and mythology, ritual and song. Indeed, what more obvious means of expression could a simple group of people have? Here, in the Djanggawul doctrine, are crystallized their hopes and desires, related to their fundamental drives, co-ordinated with the natural resources and phenomena and with the environment which they know.

Numerous references are made to the removal of the *rangga* from the *ngainmara*, a symbolic allusion also to the removal of children from the wombs of the Sisters: for *rangga* are likened to children, or human beings, and men and women may use this term to refer to their bones. The spiritual content of the bones is the same as that of the sacred *rangga*, and has, moreover, been passed on from their ancestors—those who were originally removed from the Sisters. When, for example, postulants enter the sacred hut (= *ngainmara* = uterus) on the ritual ground, they are like *rangga* being hidden away within the *ngainmara*. In a polygynous marriage, too, the wives are said to be like *rangga*: their husband has collected them into a group, and has a monopoly over them as a man has over his individual *rangga*. This likening of women to sacred *rangga* is interesting, but probably derives from the fact that women themselves are said to be the source of ritual knowledge,[1] and consequently sacred.

There is much stress, too, on the maternal qualities of the Djanggawul Sisters, although the Brother himself is of considerable importance. The Two Sisters are mentioned far more frequently, particularly in the Milingimbi version of the cycle, although this

[1] *Vide* Chapters 2 and 3. (See also M. Mead, *Male and Female*, London, 1950, pp. 102–3.)

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

severed parts became *rangga* or feathered strings, which are also regarded as *rangga*. An interesting interpretation was made by one informant, himself a ceremonial leader. Within historic times, he said, a certain man was born with both vagina and penis, and with breasts like a woman; he was bi-sexual and produced a child, after which he died. Commenting on this example, which was told to him by a grandparent, the informant suggested that these Djanggawul Sisters may have originally been bi-sexual, so that their clitorises were actually penes which they used to impregnate themselves by inserting into the vagina; for the 'clitoris-penes' were sufficiently long to curve round and use for coitus. The same informant stated that the Djanggawul Brother may possibly have been introduced later. This is, however, the tentative interpretation of one man, and does not represent group opinion.

The presence of elongated clitorises can possibly be explained in terms of the tendency to accentuate a female organ (as has been done in the case of the male); or they may, symbolically, represent the umbilical cord (as in the Song Cycle). The former explanation seems to be more probable, for much stress is placed on the erectness of a woman's clitoris during coitus,[1] while the clitorises of many Aboriginal women are fairly well developed; they are played with and handled by women from pre-adolescent days, in an endeavour to increase their size, so attracting the attentions of men and heightening their sexual satisfaction. In other drawings from the Yirrkalla area, the Djanggawul Sisters have long clitorises, dragging on the ground. In one illustration we see the Two Sisters with elongated clitorises, and the Brother with his long penis; they are holding *rangga*, and people are coming out to be placed on a *ngainmara* mat. The same drawing shows the Wauwalak Sisters,[2] who are the daughters of the Djanggawul, while the Brother puts his hand into the Sisters' wombs to remove the people. The Brother's inserting his hand into the uteri, to remove the people (children), is compared with his putting his hand into the *ngainmara* to remove the sacred *rangga*. Further, it suggests that the Sisters did not invariably give birth to such people in the normal way. The Brother's action in inserting his hand merely accentuates the theme by introducing a further point, which can be more easily represented in symbolism—that is, by the *rangga* and *ngainmara*, illustrating the phenomenon of childbirth.

Professor Lloyd Warner was the first to note the presence of the Djanggawul (which he called Djunkgao) cult, presenting this

[1] *Vide* R. Berndt, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*, for publication.

[2] The Wauwalak Sisters sponsor all *Kunapipi*, *ngurlmag* and *djunggawon* ritual. *Vide* R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Chapters I *c*, III and IV.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

Significance of the Djanggawul

material in his book, *A Black Civilization*.[1] The content of the myth which he presents will be discussed in the following chapter (3); here we are concerned with his analysis. He treated the Djanggawul in the same manner as he did the Wauwalak constellation. His opinion was that the Djanggawul cult was not so well integrated as that of the Wauwalak; and he wrongly assumed that it was merely one part of a larger cycle of stories centring around the movements of the ocean tides, and the floods of the rainy season.[2] This misinterpretation seems to have resulted from inadequate documentation. The myth and rituals, as he describes them, are incomplete, and the great song cycle is virtually ignored. However, even if we cannot accept Warner's assumptions concerning the significance and fundamental meaning of the cult, we must recognize the value of his descriptions, particularly as regards observational material, relating to the rituals.[3] Comparing the Djanggawul with the Wauwalak,[4] Warner concludes that both are very much the same in content. We, on the contrary, contend that although both have the same basic significance, stressing fertility, and being concerned with sexual functions and with peculiarly female characteristics, the relevant 'plots' are in themselves dissimilar.[5] They differ in many important details, which need not be tabulated here.

The essential distinction between the two is the fact that the Djanggawul are concerned with procreation, while the Wauwalak are, so to speak, interested in maintaining the *status quo*. The Wauwalak are not assumed to have 'brought into being' all life, as are the Djanggawul; they symbolically re-enact the situation, but are not the creators of it. In native epistemological doctrine this distinction is clearly defined. The Djanggawul came first, the Wauwalak later. It is, nevertheless, a debatable point whether or not the Djanggawul have influenced Aboriginal behaviour more than the Wauwalak. True, the latter have inspired at least three separate rituals; but to counterbalance this the Djanggawul remain aloof in inspiring the great *nara*, which in the ritual sense is much 'higher' than any of the Wauwalak ceremonies.

Warner, however, stressed the 'identification of the two myths and the fundamental sameness of the two rituals.'[6] The rituals do

[1] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, pp. 333–36, 399–403, 406–7.
[2] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 333.
[3] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, pp. 340–56.
[4] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, pp. 399–403.
[5] Compare the full Djanggawul myth presented in Chapter 2 of this volume with the Wauwalak mythology set out in *Kunapipi* (R. Berndt), Chapter III.
[6] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

differ considerably, as do elements in the myths, but each does help us to understand the deeper significance of the other. The many totems that appear in the Djanggawul, and also in other myths, serve, as Warner also noted,[1] as concrete expression of the underlying concepts of Arnhem Land society, in its relation to nature and to its own institutions; and we find that these concepts are deeply embedded in the myth. They are thus part of the myth, and so subject to interpretation through ritual. But in Chapter 3 we shall discuss something of the Djanggawul's association with totemism. Totemism is relevant, but subsidiary, to the basic significance of the myth. The point that totemism is a philosophy and not a religion, that its manifestations in the ritual provide material crystallizations of religious concepts, must be kept in mind.

That the Djanggawul myth should express the fundamental idea of the backward and forward movements of the tides in the spring floods, either in the present era or in the mythological past,[2] is not made clear in Warner's discussion. The presence of water in the myth is quite a logical feature, for salt and fresh water, like tides and floods, are part of the environment; they are important in much the same degree as other natural phenomena. All of these are drawn into the underlying theme of the Djanggawul, for it is intimately concerned with all fertility, and with all the elements that make possible the continuance of the state of existence known to the Aborigines. That is to say, to bring about fertility (an aspect which, expressed consciously or otherwise, seems to predominate both in the minds of the natives and in their ritual symbolism), the sequence of the seasons must be assured; and this assurance, or the desire to attain it, is expressed symbolically in both myth and songs and materially in totemic manifestation. Warner suggests[3] that the rise and fall of the water in clan wells 'is something more than the symbolization of the flood as male and spiritual'. It is, according to him, 'an actual outflow of water from the sacred centres of the land, which causes the growth of new plants and animals and the refertilizing of the earth. It is the male principle fertilizing the earth.' This aspect receives some treatment in the myth and songs; and excluding his flood concept, and the idea that the male alone is 'spiritual' (a word, incidentally, which needs definition), this is very much what is actually involved. Warner, however, influenced by Durkheimian theory, by his ideas about ceremonial purification, and woman's ritual uncleanliness, has confused the

[1] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 401.
[2] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 402.
[3] *op. cit.*, p. 402.

Significance of the Djanggawul

issues. The concept that woman is profane, in comparison with man the sacred, is not a feature of eastern Arnhem Land religious or lay thought.

The symbolism in the myth and songs makes clear the intentions of the relevant ritual. In the *dua* moiety *nara*, as an expression of the Djanggawul ideology, the major incidents of the myth are re-enacted in symbolic form. Much of this ritual is taken up with totemic dancing; and the animals, birds, reptiles and vegetable matter danced are totemic in so far that they relate directly or indirectly to the dominant theme. Further, these totems are not used only in relation to the Djanggawul, but are part of the spiritual heritage of the *dua* moiety linguistic groups and clans, which in turn are associated with the Djanggawul.

Dua nara rituals are all inspired by the Djanggawul, although at times irrelevant elements enter; for example, other *dua* spirits or Ancestral Beings of minor importance become associated with the main theme, or *jiritja* moiety elements appear from time to time in the myth. But the Djanggawul are *dua*, and their ceremonies are solely of the *dua nara*, and not (as Warner mentions)[1] of both *dua* and *jiritja*. The latter are inspired by their own separate ideology, and by the Laintjung and Banaitja Ancestral Beings; and although similar in many points, they are basically different. However, it is the practice for some *jiritja* men (maternally related to the *dua* moiety) to help out *dua* postulants, or vice versa: and it is usual for both moieties to hold their own particular rituals at approximately the same time. At Yirrkalla, separate ceremonial grounds and separate huts are used by each moiety; but in the western Arnhem Land variant of the *nara* rituals the same ground is used, although each moiety has its separate hut (or shade), which may or may not adjoin that of the other. In eastern Arnhem Land, the ritual demarcation between the moieties is particularly noticeable.

The *dua*, and for that matter the *jiritja*, *nara* are the most important religious ceremonies of eastern Arnhem Land. Being far more important that the *kunapipi*, *ngurlmag* and *djunggawon*, they are not concerned with age-grading in the same sense that other initiation rituals are. They are primarily revelatory in character; and although novices are received, they are rather neophytes who are already fully initiated into manhood, and already possessed of a certain amount of religious knowledge. By the time a man sees his first *nara* he is well past adolescence, and usually married; he would normally be expected to have already seen the *ngurlmag*, and to be taking a major part in *djunggawon* dancing, as well as in that of the *kunapipi*, although the latter is optional.

[1] *op. cit.*, p. 340.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

Significance of the Djanggawul

Long before the actual rituals commence, men go out to the sacred ground to prepare the objects. The wooden poles and posts are removed from their hiding places in the water or mud, and weeks are spent in re-painting them. Women are asked to prepare long feathered strings, which are never directly given to the men, but always 'stolen' by them. This is conventional behaviour, and relates to the Djanggawul Brother and his companions' stealing the sacred *rangga*, bags and so on from the Two Sisters in the beginning (see Chapter 2). The preliminary preparations take weeks, and are accompanied by singing and invocations. Neophytes are brought in from time to time, and their chests painted with sacred clan designs: they continue to wear these when they return to the camp, and never wash or rub them off, but allow them to fade naturally. In this way the neophytes contract many ritual obligations, since they must recompense their 'initiators'—that is, those who are revealing the mysteries to them. They must also observe a number of tabus relating to their general behaviour, and to the partaking of food.[1] Later, the same neophytes are shown the *rangga* emblems and their designs, and the meanings are explained to them.

By this time, the neophytes have reached the stage when they are regarded as being eligible to witness the first ceremonies. The sacred ground has been prepared, the shade erected and the objects completed. A sacred aura is now said to pervade the ritual ground, and the spiritual presence of the Djanggawul is assured.

The ceremonies which now begin are not seen completely by those neophytes who are brought to the ground for the first time. Years may pass before the complete series has been revealed to them, and it is not as a rule until they have reached middle age that they may take an active part in the ritual. Sometimes, however, younger men who show particular aptitude for religious discussion, dancing and singing, are accepted much earlier. There is always a need for young and energetic dancers and actors; and the older men, by allowing the younger men a degree of active participation, cement their adherence to the cult and so reinforce their own position. But even when younger men dance or act, older men are the organizers, and it is their duty to show the way to the other. They, the older men, are always acknowledged to possess greater knowledge of these matters, to be in a position to impart that knowledge. The older men, when they do dance or act, are almost invariably more proficient than the younger men; and although there is a tendency to-day to allow the younger men a greater measure of participation, it still takes years before a neophyte may be legitimately classified as an initiate.

[1] The economic aspect of the *nara* rituals cannot, unfortunately, be dealt with here.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

calling out in the early morning. After this they heard 'people and children' crying; and here spirit footprints of children may be seen on the rocks. These are the spirits who are as yet unborn, and remain in the uterus of the elder Sister, Bildjiwuraroiju. After leaving Gagubam the Djanggawul passed Bauwuling (or Bauwijara) where they saw *bauwaldja* catfish swimming after small fish and *bunabi* trepang slugs. And above Bauwuling, in the fresh water well on dry land, surrounded by mangroves and salt water, was *biabia* refuse from the trepang.

After spending some time in the Port Bradshaw country, establishing sacred sites, they decided to walk down the beach towards Caledon Bay; but there were so many totemic folk in those parts that they again got into their canoe and paddled down to Gambuga-(wi) at Caledon Bay, in territory of the Karlpu linguistic group. There they are said to have made a sacred place, and put special *djuda*. These were *rangga* emblems which, with others, they had carried from Bralgu in the *ngainmara* mat, and trees sprang up as they were pushed into the ground.

When they had done this they looked up, and saw a big dry weather cloud or mirage, called *wulma*. It was coming from Buguwolumiri, in the country of the Djapu linguistic group, towards the 'bottom' (or southern part) of Blue Mud Bay; so they travelled towards that place, and put more dreamings there. Their clitorises and penis were still dragging on the ground.

Then they saw another *wulma* towards the 'top' of Blue Mud Bay, at Bugalji, in Djarlwak linguistic group territory. They paddled around the coast to that place, and left dreamings there. Then, abandoning their canoe, they went on foot through the bush until they came to Balimauwi; this is also in Djarlwak country, on the northern side of Rose River. They made a big camp, building a number of different 'shades' or huts, which to-day are paperbark trees; and there they also placed many dreamings.

Thus through the greater part of the country about Port Bradshaw, below Jelangbara almost to Rose River, all along the coast and even a little way inland, the Djanggawul left special drawings symbolically related to themselves and to totemic beings. They left, too, sacred *rangga* emblems, such as the *djuda*, the *djanda* (goanna) and *mauwulan* (associated with water springs), as well as sacred baskets. At all those places, moreover, they established their cult, with the singing of songs and the ritual of the *dua* moiety *nara* ceremonies.

While at Balimauwi, they looked up into the north western sky and saw a great *wulma* hanging over Ngaluwi ('inside' name Waguralgu) at Arnhem Bay, in the territory of the Ngeimil and

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
O117 Murngin O117

rôle, and the miracle of childbirth is hers alone. Upon that simple but fundamental thesis much of this traditional epic is based.

Woman's participation in the *dua nara* is thus both logical and necessary. Each sex, however, has its own part to play; and the Djanggawul cycle has indicated not only the physical but also the culturally defined ritual differences between men and women.

In this volume, when describing the beliefs and practices associated with the Djanggawul cycle and the performance of *nara* ritual, we have purposely employed the term cult. This does not mean, however, that it is controlled or shared by a select group, the acceptance of members within the order being determined by totemic, clan or linguistic group affinities, by status, prestige or economic position. This is not so. The Djanggawul cult is one of a number existing contemporaneously in this region, each having its own mythology and associated ceremonies. All these cults are in some degree interrelated, and all male members of the society are eligible as active participants. Boys and young men pass automatically through the age-grading ceremonies of the *djunggawon*, *kunapipi* and *ngurlmag*. In addition to these, there are certain revelatory rituals, which are not initiatory. The extent of a man's active participation in the latter, and his eligibility for leadership, depend upon several factors—for example, on his moiety and kinship affiliations, and on whether or not the cult's mythology and ritual belong to his particular linguistic group or clan, and to his father's family. Such factors, however, never operate to debar him altogether, and in many cases his relationship to the cult through his mother's family may have a compensatory effect. The same conditions apply in the case of the major religious cults, the *dua* and *jiritja* moiety *nara*. All men may be accepted as initiands to the *nara* ceremonies, and all may subsequently become neophytes; but the measure of their active participation and leadership depends on the factors mentioned above. Only a *dua* moiety man, belonging to the most powerful *dua* linguistic group and clan, can rise to ceremonial headmanship in the *dua nara*; and here, too, the principle of descent may operate. The writer's main informants in recording and discussing the Djanggawul songs, mythology and so on were *dua* headmen, assisted by other men who were correspondingly 'graded' in the ritual sphere.

Comparison of the myth (Chapter 2) with the Songs reveals certain inconsistencies. These may perhaps stem from the fact that the myth is an over-all sketch of the Djanggawul's journey and adventures; it allows rather more latitude and scope to individual narrators, and does not purport to describe various incidents in any great detail. On the whole, it does agree basically with the Songs; but

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

which is created by the Djanggawul themselves. The *rangga* folk dance from the wombs of their Mothers into the *nara* shade; the sacred clapping sticks are beaten, the songs rhymically sung, and they sway their bodies in the dance. The first *nara* is being performed, re-enacting the travels of the divine Beings; and the *rangga* folk have been produced 'so that they may follow the law'. The people, that is to say, by performing the *nara*, by re-enacting the travels of the Djanggawul and manipulating the *rangga* emblems, ensure the continuation of the life they know and love. The *nara* performed by the *rangga* folk under the direction of the Djanggawul is described as being exactly the same as that carried out by present-day Aborigines. It expresses the faith which they have in their social group, in their culture, and in their environment; it ensures the continuance of all the elements expressed directly and symbolically in the myth and in the Songs. Women will continue to bear children, the seasons will continue to come and go in ordered sequence, and the land will continue to produce food in abundance. All this will come about only if the *nara* is enacted, if the power of the Sacred Beings is made available, and if the faith of the people themselves—both men and women—retains the intensity and depth originally inspired by the Djanggawul.

The implications of the Djanggawul cult are numerous, and should be the subject of detailed and comprehensive treatment. Here, however, we can touch on them only briefly.

There is, for instance, the assumption that these Beings came from another country, somewhere to the east or north-east, bringing with them their sacred objects and ritual, and the essentials of their cult. That is, they were originally aliens, who presumably introduced their ideology to the indigenous inhabitants. The latter are here referred to vaguely as spirits, and not as human beings; this is, possibly, a form of rationalization, to the effect that the first 'real' people were those who adopted the Djanggawul cult.

Then there are what may be termed the various psycho-analytic points of view. Followers of Géza Roheim, for example, may see in the stress on the Mother, and (for instance) the identification of circumcision with the severing of the umbilical cord, a manifestation of the universal Oedipus Complex. Abram Kardiner and his school may find in the Djanggawul a projection of the emotions arising from the Aborigines' response towards their own parents during their early formative years. Moreover, the myth and songs may perhaps be regarded as, primarily, an expression of the fundamental motivations of the people, the narrative itself serving merely as a connecting thread, which provides a semblance of coherence.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

Epilogue

Certainly we may assume that the elements which have been transmitted from one generation to another bear some relation to the cultural emphasis of the people, the emphases during the process being on those which were (consciously or otherwise) felt to be congenial. However, this question obviously raises many issues which cannot be dealt with here.

Finally, what is the future of the cult in the contact situation? The theme of fertility is obviously important in this respect, affecting as it does the continuance of the local Aboriginal group. Elsewhere in Australia, with few exceptions, the Aborigines have declined in numbers under the disrupting influence of the alien culture. In north-central and north-eastern Arnhem Land, the emphasis on reproduction, among both human and animal species, appears to have served, so far, as a potent factor in combating this trend. The Djanggawul cult, therefore, may well be significant in helping to ensure that the Aborigines of this region continue to survive. Perhaps because of its basic associations, it is still a vital force in the society, with (in so far as such comparisons are possible) an even greater emotional hold on the people than other local cults which flourish contemporaneously with it.

This subject, too, needs careful consideration. Nevertheless, if something at least of the faith and the beliefs of the Djanggawul cult can be carried on into the changing society which is developing as a result of alien contact, it may help to ensure the north-central and north-eastern Arnhem Landers' physical survival. Moreover, the blending of such essential features of their traditional life with the new elements which they inevitably absorb from the alien culture will provide them with a situation which is in some degree congenial to them; and the psychological effects of this will have, also, an important bearing on their survival.

The themes which we have noted in this work are not limited in their application to one human group in one specific area. Although phrased in the terms of this particular culture, they have, so to speak, a universal validity. This being so, there is no reason why the Djanggawul cult, adapted perhaps to meet the demands of the present crisis in Aboriginal life, should not endure as a living faith, to play its part in ensuring the continuity of the Aboriginal group, as a people adjusted to meet, in their own way, the changing world which confronts them.